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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5333  
INFO RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ALMATY IMMEDIATE 7699  
RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT IMMEDIATE 1803  
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK IMMEDIATE 2327  
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE IMMEDIATE 2223  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 6572  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 1327

C O N F I D E N T I A L TASHKENT 000495

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN AND DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/14/2016

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: POWER OUTAGE SPARKS ANDIJON PROTEST

REF: TASHKENT 190

Classified By: AMB. JON R. PURNELL, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: Over 100 local residents protested gas and electric outages near the Andijon city limits on March 8. Reports conflict in the details, but all agree that residents are fed up with the frequent utility interruptions, which have left many with no means to cook or heat their homes. Protests have occurred in the past in similar circumstances. In this case, the power was restored soon after the two-hour protest, which may lead locals to believe that future protests could also bring about desired results at minimal cost. End summary.

12. (C) Embassy's Ferghana Valley contacts confirmed that at least several dozen Andijon residents, predominantly women and children, blocked a major thoroughfare near the city limits to protest residential gas and electric outages. An Internet press report claimed that more than 100 people protested in Andijon's Northern Micro-District for over two hours and broke several car windows. One Margilon-based human rights contact said he had been told by an associate in Andijon that the number of protestors may have exceeded 1,000, and another contact said that police arrested ten to 15 men at the scene in a series of scuffles.

13. (C) The reported spark for the demonstration was an electrical power outage on March 8, which left district residents without any means of cooking or heating their homes. According to contacts, large sections of Andijon have been without residential gas for much of the winter, forcing residents to heat their homes with electric space heaters and cook on electric stoves. Reports diverge on the cause of the outage. A local human rights activist said that he understood that an electrical pole collapsed, physically cutting a power line. Another contact said that he had been told that the local power utility shut off the supply because of non-payment by residents. After protesting for approximately two hours, the protestors allegedly scuffled with the authorities before dispersing, and electrical power was restored. (Note: Reports conflict on which came first. End note.)

14. (C) Comment: If most reports are reliable in estimating the demonstration at around 100-150 people, this protest was relatively small. This is the second such demonstration we have heard of in Andijon in 2006, the earlier coming in January, also to protest gas outages (reftel). While both protests have been small and mostly consisting of women and children, in the current environment any public demonstration is significant. Both before and since the Andijon events of

May 2005, economic discontent has been the predominant cause of civil unrest. One reason may be that such protests get results. Whether the resumption of electrical power on March 8 was due to a simple repair job or a deliberate decision by the local government, the protestors -- and those who get their news from the rumor mill -- may conclude that a future protest might bring about similarly positive results at minimal cost.

PURNELL